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SUBJECT: ZIMBABWE AGREEMENT: DIVIDED UNSC REACTION

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In a September 19 briefing to the Security Council, A/SYG Menkerios called the Zimbabwe power-sharing agreement a "delicate compromise." He hoped that an ongoing dispute about division of portfolios between the Mugabe and Tsvangirai camps would prove a short-lived "snag." He reiterated the need for Zimbabwean authorities to allow unfettered access to humanitarian assistance, warned of the dire need for food aid, and called on donors to assist. Council members expressed support for the agreement. Several members (UK, U.S., France) called for rapid implementation of the agreement and lifting of remaining restrictions on humanitarian operations. Other members (Russia, South Africa) urged patience from the international community on the agreement's implementation. END SUMMARY.

MENKERIOS DESCRIBES AGREEMENT AS "DELICATE"

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¶2. (SBU) In the first Security Council session on Zimbabwe since the September 15 signing of the Zimbabwe power-sharing agreement, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Haile Menkerios reviewed the Zimbabwe agreement, describing it as "a delicate compromise," in which ZANU will receive 15 seats, the MDC-Tsvangirai 13 seats and the MDC-Mutumbara 3 seats. He stated that ministerial portfolio division remained "a snag" but believed the parties would resolve it soon. He reiterated the Secretary-General's message urging Zimbabwean authorities to facilitate unhindered access to humanitarian assistance. He called on donors to provide food aid, stating that 3.8 million Zimbabweans will need food between October and December, and 5.1 million between January and March. "If properly implemented," he said, the agreement could change the lives of Zimbabweans. He concluded by urging the parties to continue to consult.

SOME UNSC MEMBERS EXPRESS CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM

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¶3. (SBU) Many UNSC members, including the U.S., UK, Belgium, and France, emphasized the new partners' responsibility to implement the agreement, and called on authorities to lift restrictions on humanitarian operations. Members raised other issues, including Belgium's mention of the recent arrest of a trade unionist. China (also stating that implementation will be important) added that Zimbabweans will be disappointed if the new government does not succeed. Italy said the agreement "may not represent the end of the crisis." Burkina Faso said they hope Zimbabwe overcomes the difficulty in assigning ministerial posts.

OTHER MEMBERS CALL FOR PATIENCE WITH IMPLEMENTATION

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¶4. (SBU) Other UNSC members, including Russia and South Africa, referred to the agreement as a breakthrough and urged members to be patient with implementation. Russia deemed the agreement a success "of negotiation over use of force." South Africa stated that "cabinets are not formed overnight"

and added that Kenya took "several weeks" to form a cabinet. While South Africa agreed with other UNSC members that the humanitarian situation is "very bad," they added that both negotiating parties agreed to address it immediately.

Khalilzad